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AT THE CURTAIN: At a point along the Iron Curtain which separates satellite Europe from the free world, John M. Costello, Washington Catholic lay leader, records impressions for broadcast over Radio Free Europe. Mr. Costello was one of a group of 60 prominent Americans who recently inspected the RFE facilities on behalf of its sponsoring organization, Crusade for Freedom.

Despite Khrushchev Smiles, Reds Kept Jamming Radio

By John K. C. Oh

Despite the alleged "thaw" in the cold war since the recent Khrushchev visit here, Radio Free Europe continues its 10-year-old "war of truth." This "war" is waged through the medium of radio waves that defy the ever-present sentry towers, electrified barbed wire, and anti-tank fortifications of the Iron Curtain, which shows no sign of cracking anywhere.

So said John M. Costello of Washington, national chairman of the International Relations Committee of the National Council of Catholic Men, who returned this past week from a 10-day study tour of Radio Free Europe activities, which began in 1950. Mr. Costello is a former member of Congress from California.

Sixty Americans made the trip sponsored by the Crusade for Freedom, the non-profit Ameri-

can organization which, according to Mr. Costello, guarantees an annual budget of \$10,000,000 for RFE.

It was at Tillyschantz, a small border town between West Germany and Czechoslovakia, that the former Congressman observed, for the first time, the maze of barbed wire, land mines, and other physical components of the "Great Wall" that separates the Soviet-dominated East Europe from the free world. At this town on the armed border, Mr. Costello was convinced that "the Iron Curtain was as formidable as ever."

Accuracy Emphasized

"A major weapon," said Mr. Costello, "that is now penetrating the Iron Curtain is electric waves of RFE, and the ammunition is the truth broadcasts." RFE has grown since 1950 from a one-transmitter station into the world's most powerful network broadcasting to the captive countries, operating 28 transmitters and carrying almost 3,000 program hours each week.

Mr. Costello declared that RFE is "keeping the spark of hope alive" among 76 million people in five satellite countries. RFE's "target countries" are Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Romania, and Bulgaria.

"The hard hitting effectiveness of RFE," said Mr. Costello, "cannot be questioned. Its accurate and prompt news reports often beat the Communist newscasts by considerable margin." For example, Mr. Costello related, RFE's report on the successful launching of the first Soviet moon rocket beat the Communist newscast by 45 minutes, and

reports on Stalin's death by several hours.

Mr. Costello said that RFE's emphasis on accuracy in its newscasts was "amazing." RFE has over 100,000 "fact sheets" on Czechoslovakia alone, and this reference file is increased by about 1,000 new sheets each month. RFE's scripts are checked and double checked against the reference material and other sources before they are broadcast.

"RFE headquarters believes that over 85 per cent of its heavy news coverage — 10 minutes every hour on the hour — is picked up by the target audience," said Mr. Costello. As with any other radio network, RFE's broadcasts include a variety of programs, but news is the key to its efforts. The estimated number of radio sets capable of picking up RFE broadcasts in the target countries is 9,000,000.

Powerful Competitor

The Communists are now operating about 2,000 "jammers" in 200 different locations, according to Mr. Costello. The noise from these jammers, intended to prevent the captive people from listening to RFE, never stopped even during Khrushchev's visit.

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